

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

Self-Retaining Retractor

Inventor:

Dr. Refaat S. Fanous
4 Merrymount Drive
North Dartmouth MA 02747

Attorney docket number:
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Attorneys:

Bromberg & Sunstein LLP
125 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02110-1618
Tel: (617) 443-9292
Fax: (617) 443-0004

Attorney Docket: 2682/102

Self-Retaining Retractor**Cross Reference to Related Applications**

The present application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application, Serial No.
5 60/395,234, filed July 11, 2002, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Technical Field and Background Art

The invention relates to surgical devices and methods, and in particular to devices and methods for vaginal and perineal surgery.

In present techniques for vaginal surgery, it is necessary for a surgeon to be assisted
10 by other personnel during an operation in order to retract the vaginal walls. Typically, a weight retractor is used to retract the back wall of the vagina while the assisting personnel retract the other walls of the vagina. The presence of the other personnel to assist in retraction can make the surgery more difficult by crowding the surgeon's range of motion. It may also be more costly for the surgeon, and prevent the personnel who are assisting in
15 retraction from performing other tasks to aid in the surgery.

Summary of the Invention

In an embodiment of the invention, a retraction device for gynecological procedures on a patient comprises a frame attached to a handle and at least one retractor adjustably mounted to the frame. The frame may have one or more fissures that hold suture material
20 during a surgical procedure. The frame may be attached to the handle with a hinge. In a particular embodiment, the hinge includes a ratchet mechanism.

In another embodiment of the invention, the retraction device includes a jig for adjustably mounting the retractor to the frame. The frame of the retraction device may include a track or rail; the retractor may be mounted to the track or rail with the jig.
25 Alternatively, the frame may include a slot, which may be corrugated, in which the jig is positioned in the slot. Another alternative includes having a portion of the edges of the

frame corrugated, the jig configured to contact the edge of the frame. The jigs used in embodiments of the invention may include locks.

In an alternate embodiment of the invention, a retraction device includes a support element that is attached to the handle for retaining the device in a position. The support
5 element may include a sheet capable of retaining the device using the weight of the patient. Alternatively, the support element may include a sheet attached to at least one rod, the rod being configured to fit into a track. A support element may also comprise a bar which is attachable to a table. A bracket or a jig may be used to attach the support element to the handle of the retraction device.

10 In other embodiments of the invention, a retraction device includes one or more of the retractors having a curved blade, and a retractor-handle attached to the frame. The retractor-handle may have a groove along a portion of the length of the retractor-handle; the groove having differential width in varying portions of the groove. The retractor handle may be attached to the frame with a jig. A hinge may be used to attach the curved blade to the
15 retractor-handle. The hinge may include a ratchet-type mechanism or be configured as a ball-type hinge. The curved blade of a retractor may be configured to form a groove capable of supporting another blade. The retraction device may include an anterior retractor, a posterior retractor, or a side retractor.

According to another embodiment of the invention, a method of retracting the walls
20 of a patient comprises: providing a retraction device including a frame, and a plurality of retractors mounted on the frame; and retracting the vaginal walls with the retractors, such that the frame maintains a separation of the retractors and the vaginal walls. The method may provide for a retraction device that includes a handle for mounting the frame in a desired position. The method may also provide for a retraction device with means of
25 adjustably mounting the retractors on the frame.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The foregoing features of the invention will be more readily understood by reference to the following detailed description, taken with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a handle and frame of a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 shows a cross-sectional view of the frame of the self-retaining retractor of the embodiment of Fig. 1;

5 Fig. 3 shows a frame with a groove through which a jig runs to support a retractor according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3A shows a cross-sectional view of the self-retaining retractor device of the embodiment of Fig. 3;

10 Fig. 4 shows a frame with a corrugated groove through which a jig runs to support a retractor according to an embodiment of the invention;

Figs. 4A and 4B show a jig which may be used with the frame of Fig. 4;

Fig. 5 shows a frame with a corrugated edge to which a jig may attach, supporting a retractor, according to an embodiment of the invention;

Figs. 5A – 5C show a jig which may be used with the frame of Fig. 5;

15 Fig. 6 shows a self-retaining retractor device with a support element to support the device using the weight of a patient according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 shows a self-retaining retractor device with an anterior retractor having a blade supported by a curved blade and a table-mounted support element according to an embodiment of the invention;

20 Fig. 8 shows a side view of an anterior retractor for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 9 shows a perspective view of an anterior retractor for a self-retaining retractor according to an embodiment of the invention;

25 Fig. 10 shows a side view of a retractor for a self-retaining retractor device in which the blade and retractor-handle are attached with a ball-hinge according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 11 shows a long blade for use with an anterior retractor according to an embodiment of the invention;

30 Fig. 12 shows a top view of a posterior retractor for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 13 shows a view of a side retractor for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 14 shows a side view of either a side or posterior retractor for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

5 Fig. 15 shows a retractor without a slot for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 16 shows a jig that may be used with the retractor depicted in Fig. 15;

Fig. 17 shows a support element for a self-retaining retractor according to an embodiment of the invention;

10 Fig. 18 shows side view of a table-mounted support element configured to fit into a cylindrical track of a table for a self-retaining retractor according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 18A shows a perspective view of the support element of Fig. 18;

15 Fig. 19 shows another support element for a self-retaining retractor utilizing a bar as wide as an operating table according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 20 shows a bracket to attach a support element to the handle of a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention;

Figs. 21A and 21B show bottom and top views of a jig for a self-retaining retractor according to an embodiment of the invention; and

20 Figs. 22A and 22B show bottom and top views of an alternative embodiment of a jig.

Detailed Description of Specific Embodiments

Fig. 1 shows a handle and frame of a self-retaining retractor device, according to an embodiment of the invention, that removes the need for personnel to assist a surgeon in
 25 keeping the vaginal walls or perineal incision retracted, and allows for smooth, complete retraction of the side walls, with the best possible surgical field; the device may be set up by a surgeon without assistance. A racket-shaped rigid frame **1** contains a track **2** along which a surgeon may smoothly adjust the location of a set of retractors, without the need for assisting personnel. A handle **4** is connected to the frame **1** by a hinge **3**, so that the frame **1** may be
 30 moved to firmly contact the patient. A ratchet mechanism **6** near the hinge allows the angle

between the frame **1** and handle **4** to be adjusted, while holding the frame **1** in place against the patient. In one embodiment according to the invention, the major axis of the frame is, for example, 14 cm. in length, while the minor axis is 12 cm. in length.

Fig. 2 shows a cross-sectional view of the frame of the self-retaining retractor device of the embodiment of Fig. 1. A raised portion **101** of the frame's cross-section functions as a rail, along which the surgeon may slide a set of jigs (depicted in Fig. 21) that are attached to the retractors (also discussed below). The reverse side **102** of the frame contacts the patient, and is smooth, so that the jigs for the retractor may be moved around the raised portion **101** on the reverse side of the frame without directly touching the patient.

The embodiment of Fig. 1 depicts one mechanism for mounting one or more retractors to the frame of the device. However, embodiments of the invention include any means by which a retractor may be adjustably mounted to the frame of the device, and are not limited to the use of a track or rail or jig. Several non-limiting examples are discussed herein.

Fig. 3 shows the track **2** could be substituted by a groove **35** that runs along the length of the frame. Through the groove runs a jig **36** (shown in Fig. 3A) comprised of a screw with a flat circular lower end **37** and a spring-loaded sheet of metal **38** to support its place on the groove, the upper end will be a screw and a flange-nut combination **39** to hold the different retractors.

Fig. 4 shows the track **2** could be substituted by a corrugated groove **40** that runs along the frame. Through the groove a jig **41** (shown in Figs. 4A and 4B) comprised of a body with a cavity **42**. A pin **43** at its open end holds two arms **44** in a scissors manner to engage to the dents in the grooved track **40**. These arms are kept in the open position by the help of spring metals **45**. A screw and flange-nut combination attached to the body may be used to hold the different retractors.

Fig. 5 shows the frame with smooth front and back surfaces, and outer and inner edges which are corrugated **46** and along which a jig may be run. The jig (shown in Figs. 5A – 5C) is comprised of a body **47** with a cavity **48** in which two parallel arms **49** held by two deferent pins **50**. The two arms are kept in the retracted position by the help of metal spring **51**. A screw and flange-nut combination attached to the body to hold the deferent retractors.

Persons skilled in the art will readily realize that the frame of the retraction device may take on a variety of shapes that are convenient for holding retractors during gynecological procedures; the frame is not limited to the shape shown in Fig. 1. As an example, an embodiment of the invention may include a frame, as shown in Fig. 5, that alters the frame shape to include a lower portion curved **55** into the space enclosed by the frame in order to allow retractors to be attached closer to one another.

Returning to Fig. 1, a groove **5** in the handle **4** of the retraction device allows a support element (discussed further below) to attach to the handle **4**; circularly widened portions of the groove **5** allow room for a screw and flange-nut combination (shown elsewhere) to attach the support element to the handle **4**. The vertical position of the retraction device during surgery may be adjusted by moving the position of the screw and flange-nut combination to different positions in the groove **5**. As shown further below, a screw and flange-nut combination **7** holds the posterior retractor to the frame, while screw and flange-nut combination **9** holds the anterior retractor to the frame. As is apparent to those skilled in the art, the adjustment of the support element relative to the handle may be carried out by a variety of mechanisms, not limited to the specific embodiment described here.

Small fissures **8** in the raised portion **101** of the frame, shown in Fig. 2, may be used to allow holding of suture material for tagging or retraction, during surgery. Such fissures may, for example, contain projections that hold the suture material in position once the suture is pulled through the fissure in one direction, and from which the suture may be released when desired.

Fig. 6 shows an assembled view of a self-retaining retractor device, according to an embodiment of the invention. In the embodiment shown in Fig. 6, four movable retractors **10**, **17**, **21** (one on each side) are used, including an anterior retractor **10**, a posterior retractor **17**, and two side wall retractors **21**; typically, from two to four retractors may be used, but other numbers may also be used in accordance with embodiments of the invention. Three alternative versions **25**, **31**, and **34** of a support element are shown in Figs. 6, 7, 17, 18, and 19. The first version **25** of the support element allows the device to be retained in position for surgery by the patient's weight, by having support element **25** held between the patient's buttocks and the operating table. The second and third versions **31** and **34** (described later)

of a support element allow the handle **4** to be attached to the operating table using the support element.

Fig. 7 shows an oblique view of fully assembled self-retaining retractor device when utilized on patient. The view shows the retractors **10, 17, 21** fully extended and the angle of the anterior retractor open to its greatest extent. Further reference numerals indicated in Fig. 6 and 7 are discussed in each of the detailed component views of the remaining figures.

Figs. 8 and 9 show a side view and a perspective view, respectively, of an anterior retractor **10** for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention. A paddle or blade **11** of the anterior retractor has curved sides (see Fig. 3B) that allow a longer blade to be slid into the curved blade **11** as necessary during surgery. Blades of varying lengths may be utilized with the curved blade as desired. The blade **11** is attached to the anterior retractor's handle **12** by a hinge **14**, which allows gentle widening of the angle of retraction according to the desire of the surgeon. A ratchet mechanism **15** allows the angle of the blade **11** with respect to the handle **12** to be adjusted, while holding the blade **11** at the chosen angle. Similar hinge and ratchet mechanisms may be used on other retractors (such as a posterior retractor or side retractor) in accordance with embodiments of the invention. Other mechanisms may also be used to hold a particular angle of the blade with respect to the handle. As another example, shown in Fig. 10, a screw and nut combination **56** may be used to attach a retractor blade to the frame with a ball type hinge **57** that allows adjustment of the angle of the retractor blade.

In a particular embodiment, a groove **13** in the handle **12** allows attachment of the anterior retractor **10** to the frame **1** using a jig (as shown in Figs. 6 and 7), and contains an area of circular widening to allow room for a flange-nut of the jig (shown further below). The vertical position of the anterior retractor **10** may also be adjusted by moving the position of the flange-nut in the groove **13**.

Fig. 11 shows a long blade **16** for use with an anterior retractor, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The long blade **16** may be inserted into the groove of the anterior retractor's blade **11** in order to give a deeper view of the surgical field. Similar blades of varying lengths may be fitted into other retractors (such as the posterior retractor **17** or side retractors **21**) in accordance with embodiments of the invention.

Fig. 12 shows a top view of a posterior retractor **17** for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention. The posterior retractor **17** has a curved paddle or blade **18** and a handle **19**. As with the anterior retractor, a groove **20** in the handle **19** has areas of circular widening to allow room for a flange-nut of a jig (shown further below) that attaches the posterior retractor **17** to frame **1** (as shown in Figs. 6 and 7). Groove **20** also allows for adjustment of the vertical position of posterior retractor **17**. Fig. 13 shows a view of a side retractor **21** in accordance with an embodiment of the invention, which similarly features a curved paddle or blade **22**, a handle **23**, and a groove **24** in the handle for attachment of the retractor (as shown in Fig. 7). Groove **24** allows for adjustment of the lateral position of the side retractor **21**. Fig. 14 shows a side view corresponding to either a posterior or side retractor, according to embodiments of the invention.

The grooves **13**, **20**, **24** in the retractors **10**, **17**, **21** exemplify one embodiment of the invention that enables the retractors to be attached to the frame. As is apparent to those skilled in the art, other retractor designs may be used to attach the retractors to the frame in accord with embodiments of the invention. Another example, shown in Figs. 15 and 16, depicts the retractor-handles being made of solid metal **52**. Each retractor is held in place by a jig made of two sheets of metal **53**. The lower sheet will have a notch **54** for attaching to the retractor. The jig described above may be used to replace any of the jigs utilized herein (e.g. jigs used with the retractor-handle, the frame handle, or support structure); a slot or groove need not be utilized when this type of jig is substituted.

Fig. 17 shows a support element **25** for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention, which allows the device to be retained in position for surgery by the patient's weight, by having support element **25** held between the patient's buttocks and the operating table. Support element **25** attaches to the handle **4** (see Fig. 6). Support element **25** may be made, for example, of a stainless steel sheet, with a right angle bend **26** at its outer end. A jig, which may use a screw and flange nut combination in a similar fashion to the jigs described below in Fig. 21, allows attachment of the support element **25** to the handle **4**, as shown in Fig. 17. A bracket **28** may replace the jig, as shown in Fig. 20. The bracket **28** may be made of a stainless steel metal sheet that is folded over approximately one-third of its length. The bracket **28** may be placed over the right angle bend **26**. The bracket **28** may be attached to the support element **25** by screws. The bracket

28 will have a screw **29**, to attach the bracket **28** to the support element **25**, and flange-nut combination **27** on its front to which the handle **4** may be attached, as shown in Figs. 6 and 20. Sterile drapes may be used to cover the right angle bend to prevent patient contact with the jig, bracket **28** or handle **4**.

5 Figs. 7, 18, and 18A show an alternative table-mounted support element **31** for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention. Support element **31** includes two cylindrical rods **32** (with spring type sheet on one side), attached to a sheet of metal **33**. The rods **32** are configured to fit into a cylindrical track that most operating tables possess. Bracket **28** may be placed over the metal sheet after being covered by sterile drapes
10 to secure the support element **31** to a handle **4**, as described above. Alternatively, a jig may be used instead of a bracket **28**, also described earlier.

Fig. 19 shows another table-mounted support element **34** for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention. Support element **34** includes a bar that is as wide as the operating table, and contains notches in its side members to hook to the
15 operating table. Bracket **28** may be placed over the support element **34** after being covered by sterile drapes to secure the support element **31** to a handle **4**, as described above. Alternatively, a jig may be used instead of a bracket **28**, also described earlier.

Figs. 21A and 21B show bottom and top views of a jig **60** for a self-retaining retractor device according to an embodiment of the invention. Jig **60** may be used, for
20 example, to movably attach retractors **10**, **17**, and **21** to the frame **1** (as shown in Figs. 6 and 7), so that the retractors may be smoothly moved around frame **1** to achieve the best retraction for the surgical field. A body **61** of jig **60** contains a groove **62** that fits around the raised portion **101** (see Fig. 2) of the frame's cross-section, so that the jig **60** may slide around the frame **1**. A lock **63**, which may use an out-of-center wheel **64**, may be used to
25 lock the jig **60** in position on the frame **1**. The lock may be used by turning the lock's handle to tighten the jig's grip on the track once the desired location for the retractor on the frame is reached. A screw **65** extends from the body **61** of the jig **60**. After placing the handle groove of a retractor (such as retractor **10**, **17**, or **21**), or groove in another component to be attached, over the screw **65**, a flange-nut **66** secures the component to the jig **60**. As shown
30 in Figs. 22A and 22B, the out-of-center wheel **64** may be replaced by two curved spring metals **67**, which are attached to the lower part of the jig **60** that is in contact with the frame

body **1**; the spring metals **67** keeping the jig **60** in tight contact with the track, and holding the jig **60** in a desired position.

The following description provides a non-limiting example of how the self-retaining
5 retractor device may be used. The desired support element **25, 31, 34** is placed under the patient or attached to the operating table. Sterile drapes are used to cover the patient and support element. The handle **4** is firmly attached to the supporting element **25, 31, 34** using either a jig or bracket **28**, which is placed on top of the supporting element **25, 31, 34**, and a screw and flange-nut combination. The position of the handle **4** is chosen to obtain the
10 correct vertical height for the frame **1**. The blade of the posterior retractor **17** may be inserted into the patient first, and then secured to the frame **1** by a screw and flange-nut combination. Then the blade of the anterior retractor **10** may be inserted, and secured to the frame; its vertical position and position on track **2** may be adjusted; and its angle may be adjusted using ratchet mechanism **15**. Then the side retractors **21** may be inserted, and their
15 lateral position and position on track **2** adjusted. However, the particular order of insertion of the retractors, as well as their positioning and angling, may be adjusted according to the nature and progress of the surgery, as will be recognized by those of skill in the art in accordance with the disclosure herein.

Although various exemplary embodiments of the invention have been disclosed, it
20 should be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made which will achieve some of the advantages of the invention without departing from the true scope of the invention.